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SUBJECT: GENERAL JOSE GUILLERMO ((GARCIA)) MERINO

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A. JOSE GUILLERMO ((GARCIA)) MERINO WAS BORN 25 JUNE 1933 IN SAN VICENTE, EL SALVADOR. HE WAS FROM A LOWER TO LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY AND ATTENDED THE INSTITUTO SANTO TOMAS, A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HIS HOME TOWN. IN 1953 HE ENTERED THE MILITARY ACADEMY, WHERE HE STUDIED LIBERAL ARTS AND MILITARY SCIENCE. WHILE IN SCHOOL, HE HAD FEW FRIENDS, ALTHOUGH HE DID DEVELOP A STRONG SENSE OF LOYALTY TO THE MILITARY. AFTER HIS GRADUATION, HE HELD MOSTLY ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS. FROM 1974 TO 1977, HE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AGENCY (ANTEL) A PRESTIGIOUS POST ALWAYS FILLED BY THE MILITARY. IN 1977, GARCIA EXPECTED TO BE DESIGNATED AS PRESIDENT; INSTEAD HIS FELLOW OFFICERS CHOSE GENERAL CARLOS ((ROMERO)) AND GARCIA BELIEVED THAT HE WAS SIDELINED BECAUSE OF HIS REPUTATION FOR HONESTY AND INTEGRITY. IN 1978, ROMERO APPOINTED HIM MILITARY COMMANDER OF SAN VICENTE, A FORM OF INTERNAL EXILE, BECAUSE OF GARCIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN A PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE PRESIDENT.

[REDACTED]

B. ON 27 FEBRUARY 1979, [REDACTED] REPORTED COLONELS ANTONIO ((GONZALEZ)) ELIZONDO, JOSE GUILLERMO GARCIA AND FORMER ARMY COLONEL JUAN ANTONIO ((MARTINEZ)) WERE INVOLVED IN A COUP PLOT AGAINST PRESIDENT ROMERO. ON 15 FEBRUARY 1979, FORMER ARMY GENERAL JOSE ALBERTO ((MEDRANO)), [REDACTED] WAS CALLED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. MEDRANO TOLD PRESIDENT ROMERO THAT THE ~~DIS~~ ~~SION~~ ~~OF~~ ~~THE~~ GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED, AND COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED BY REPLACING THE RANKING MINISTERS.

C. ON 5 OCTOBER 1979 PRESIDENT ROMERO INDIVIDUALLY CONTACTED COLONELS JOSE EUGENIO VIDES CASANOVA, JAIME ABDUL GUITERREZ AND JOSE GUILLERMO GARCIA, AND PERSONALLY ACCUSED THEM OF BEING INVOLVED IN A COUP PLOT. EACH DENIED THE ACCUSATION. [REDACTED] ON 30 MAY 1979 SEVERAL MAJORS OF THE 1963 MILITARY CLASS AND VIDES, GUITERREZ AND GARCIA HELD INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH THEY REACHED AN AGREEMENT TO POOL MILITARY RESOURCES IN PLANNING A POSSIBLE COUP AGAINST PRESIDENT ROMERO.

D. IN OCTOBER 1979, GARCIA HELPED PLAN THE COUP THAT TOPPLED THE ROMERO REGIME AND INSTEAD OF SEEKING A SEAT ON THE JUNTA, FORMED TO RULE THE COUNTRY, HE CHOSE TO BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE, WHERE HE GAINED OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE ARMED FORCES AND BECAME, IN EFFECT, THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE AND WAS FREE TO PURSUE HIS FOREMOST GOAL--PRESERVING THE COHESION OF THE ARMED

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